

# Light



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# Editorial . . .

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'BETTER IS THE END of a thing than the beginning thereof: . . .'<sup>1</sup>

BY THE TIME you, the reader, have this issue of LIGHT on a New World in your hands, the year 1992 will be fast approaching its close.

Whether you agree with the sentiments of the wise man Solomon about the end of things, will to some degree depend on your own experiences in 1992. For some people, because 1992 has marked a highlight in their lives, they will be sorry to say goodbye to the year which has given them much pleasure. For others, bitter experiences mean that they will shed no tears at the passing of the year, but will look forward to the New Year in the hope that it will prove to be better than the old.

The peoples of those countries which once formed Yugoslavia, a favourite of many Europeans for their holidays, will without doubt hope that 1993 will see an end to the appalling atrocities which have been seen in the news media. Ethnic cleansing is the modern description of behaviour which has long been the hall-mark of human nature, and our history books testify to this fact. **Will** the New Year bring relief to the suffering millions of the world, or will the change from one year to another, somewhat artificial, mean more of the same — man's inhumanity to man?

Like so many statements in the Bible, the one made by Solomon with which we have started the Editorial for this issue, needs to be looked at in the context of Bible teaching. While many will agree that 1992 is best forgotten others will look to the future in hopeful anticipation. For these, Solomon's observation may seem to be rather cynical. But what **did** Solomon have in mind?

The word in the Hebrew language which Solomon used for 'end', means literally 'the hinder part' or 'latter end'. The writings of the wise man, inspired as they are by God, are his reflections on life and are based upon his own experiences. He was required to learn from bitter experience that life is vanity, chasing the wind, **unless** our lives are spent seeking the will of God. Only if we try to live according to God's Word can we hope to make sense of all of our experiences. In this respect, our latter end **can** be better than our beginning. Solomon also wrote this:

'A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ecclesiastes 7.8    <sup>2</sup>Ecclesiastes 7.1

In this reference there is a clear play upon the Hebrew language which Solomon was using. *'Shem'* is the word for name; and *'shemen'* is the word for 'ointment'. While ointment can help us overcome physical ailments, there is only one thing which will help us at the end of our lives, and that is to be known of God — to have, in fact, a good name. Only those whose names are recorded in the book of life can look with confidence to the future, be it the future of 1993 or beyond.

'Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.'<sup>3</sup>

If the day we die marks the end of a life spent in service for God rather than in serving **ourselves**, then we **can** say that that day is better than the day we were born. In another sense, we can see that baptism, essential to salvation, is a symbolic death and burial. The Apostle Paul tells us that this is so:

'Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.'<sup>4</sup>

So then, how shall we view the closing week or two of 1992 and the approach of the New Year? If it has been a bad year for us so far, let us resolve to go into the New Year holding the hand of God. We have His Word as our guide and He will receive us if we truly seek Him in faith. Maybe you have had a good 1992. Be thankful for that but make sure that the path you are walking is acceptable to God so that your **latter** end will be blessed also.

The Editor

<sup>3</sup>Malachi 3.16,17    <sup>4</sup>Romans 6.3,4

# The Background to Paul's Letters

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IN ORDER TO understand better a number of Paul's remarks in his thirteen<sup>1</sup> letters, now incorporated into the New Testament, it will be helpful to readers if they bear in mind certain basic facts underlying the apostle's mission:

- 1 Paul was directly commissioned by the risen Christ as his appointed '*apostle*' (ie 'one sent') to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. The Book of Acts describes how he faithfully carried out this work, especially in a number of missionary journeys. The first of these took him (and Barnabas) to Cyprus and then to certain cities of Asia Minor, in which he established 'churches', ie assemblies of believers. In subsequent journeys he revisited and consolidated the congregations already established; he also pushed forward to new areas in the Roman province of Asia and in Greece and Macedonia. During some of these journeys there were periods of lengthy stay in towns such as Corinth and Ephesus, where his preaching had fallen on fertile soil.
- 2 Fundamental to Paul's gospel message was the principle of *faith* — in Jesus of Nazareth as God's long-promised 'Messiah' (= 'anointed king' — see Psalm 2. 1-6); faith also that Jesus had offered himself as the one all-sufficient sin offering on the cross;<sup>2</sup> that God had raised him from the dead and exalted him to His own right hand, ready for the appointed time when Jesus would return to judge the world in righteousness and establish God's kingdom on earth in place of the kingdoms of men. This faith on the believers' part would manifest itself in a commitment to obey Christ's commands — '*faith working through love*'.<sup>3</sup>
- 3 What was expressly *excluded* from Paul's preaching (so far as Gentiles were concerned) was any need to obey the Law of Moses which, until Christ's first coming, had been the only means of entering into covenant relationship with God. The '*new covenant*', established by the sprinkling of Christ's blood, was fully efficacious in blotting out personal sins through faith on the believer's part.

<sup>1</sup>Omitting Hebrews, where there is still some dispute about its authorship. <sup>2</sup>Isaiah 53

<sup>3</sup>Galatians 5. 6



Hence, imposition of Moses' law on Gentiles would be tantamount to 'putting the clock back' by re-establishing a code of laws which had signally failed hitherto in securing Israel's acceptance with God. In fact, retention of the Mosaic law, now that Christ had offered the perfect sacrifice, was a *repudiation* of God's mercy and grace in giving His only-begotten Son to die for us.

- 4 In spite of these weighty arguments, a number of Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were insisting that Gentile converts were also obliged to keep the Law of Moses, with its dietary restrictions and other rules of conduct, notably that of circumcision. Emissaries from this dissident group (the so-called '*circumcision party*' — Galatians 2. 12 RSV) were visiting the young churches after Paul had moved on and were seducing them from their sole reliance on Christ's sacrifice. These men were insisting that salvation could be obtained only by '*works of the law*', and not simply by a straightforward faith in God's promise of forgiveness of sins through His Son's redemptive work. Paul himself, they argued, was without true apostolic authority and was corrupting the true Christian message.<sup>4</sup>
- 5 Paul realised that this perversion of the true gospel was seriously undermining the validity and progress of God's truth with which he had been entrusted. He felt bound, therefore, to oppose these false teachers and counter their arguments with all the force he could muster. This he did by re-emphasizing that what God reckons as righteousness in His eyes is *faith in His promises*, together with submission to His will in our daily lives. By contrast, keeping Moses' law in its entirety was beyond man's power, and therefore that law inevitably led to death, not eternal life. Paul also strongly re-affirmed his true status as Christ's chosen apostle, directly instructed and guided by the Holy Spirit. Amongst his letters, that to the Galatians in particular and also those to the Romans, Corinthians (second letter), Colossians, Timothy and Titus, all reflect his concern about this 'Judaizing' menace of the first century.

<sup>4</sup>See Prof F F Bruce in his '*Expanded Paraphrase of the Epistles of Paul*' (California: Haynes Publishers Inc, 1981, pp 17-19) for more details of these false charges.

# The Second Letter to Corinth

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AS WE READ Luke's story of Paul's missionary journeys in 'Acts' we may well marvel at the number and severity of the hardships which the apostle endured for the gospel's sake. Yet Luke records only a few of the earlier troubles Paul faced and overcame. Similarly, the more specific list of hardships found in chapter 11 vs 23-28 of this second letter represents only those which the apostle had experienced up to the time of writing it — covering a period of about ten years (more were to follow his arrest in Jerusalem and its aftermath, as related in Acts 21-28). Already, as the list shows, he had suffered five whippings, three beatings with rods and three shipwrecks (verses 24, 25); at least one more shipwreck lay ahead of him.<sup>1</sup> Two items in his list have special relevance to the letter now to be reviewed — danger from his own people, the Jews, and his anxiety for all the churches (vs 26-28); there is, unhappily, a special connection between these last two.

## ANTAGONISM TO PAUL'S MISSION AND TEACHING

In this letter we can discern an underlying theme, viz Paul's repeated affirmation that he was a genuine apostle, directly appointed by Christ for this task.<sup>2</sup> What provoked this unusual emphasis? It would seem that the partisan spirit rebuked in the earlier letter<sup>3</sup> had worsened, and that certain church leaders were now openly undermining the apostle's authority. They were accusing him of vacillation,<sup>4</sup> self commendation,<sup>5</sup> underhand ways<sup>6</sup> and designs on funds collected for the poor;<sup>7</sup> also of penning strongly worded letters but unwilling to challenge his opponents when present among them<sup>8</sup> or to accept material support for his preaching efforts.<sup>9</sup> Who then were the adversaries, whom Paul brands as '*false apostles, deceitful workers*'? They are not expressly named, although they were clearly within the Christian community. From this letter and others<sup>10</sup> it appears that they were prominent converted Jews, leaders of very strong factions within the various churches. They were attempting to make the Law of Moses binding on all believers, Gentiles as well as

<sup>1</sup>Acts 27    <sup>2</sup>II Corinthians 5.18-20; 10.8    <sup>3</sup>See the note on I Corinthians 1.10-13 in the previous article.    <sup>4</sup>II Corinthians 1.17ff    <sup>5</sup>II Corinthians 3.1; 5.12; 6.4    <sup>6</sup>II Corinthians 4.2

<sup>7</sup>II Corinthians 8.20    <sup>8</sup>II Corinthians 10.1, 10    <sup>9</sup>II Corinthians 11.7-12    <sup>10</sup>See, for example, Galatians 4.8-11; 5.1-12; 6.12-15; Ephesians 4.14; Philippians 3.2,3; Colossians 2.8,16-23



Jews. In a word, they were 'Judaizers' or, as Paul calls them elsewhere, '*the circumcision party*'.<sup>11</sup> They were insisting on justification by works (of the Mosaic law), instead of justification by faith in Jesus Christ<sup>12</sup> — and the apostle would have none of it. If, as we read the letter, we bear in mind this background situation, we shall appreciate a great deal more of Paul's emphasis and tone throughout these 13 chapters.

### SUMMARY OF THIS LETTER

The letter opens with the apostle's reference to some unspecified deadly peril (a serious illness perhaps) he had suffered while preaching the gospel in the Roman province of Asia (now south-west Turkey). He had been weighed down almost to breaking point but had recovered through God's mercy — it had seemed like a resurrection from the dead. This experience enabled him to sympathise with the Corinthian believers in *their* troubles, and to share with them the God-given comfort he himself had received.<sup>13</sup> Paul proceeds to defend himself against some of the church members who were accusing him of vacillation in his plans to visit them.<sup>14</sup> To this charge he replies that his attitude toward them had always been positive, consistent with their welfare — no '*yes and no*' but always '*yes*', just as were God's firm promises centred in Christ. He, Jesus, was both the affirmation (the '*yes*') and the confirmation (the '*Amen*'<sup>15</sup>) of the divine purpose. Paul was concerned lest his next visit to them might be another painful one, and urged them now to forgive and restore a wrongdoer who had repented. A reference to his fellow-labourer Titus, who had returned from Corinth with good news of their obedience<sup>16</sup> brings a strong note of thanksgiving — the gospel's progress, he wrote, is rather like a Roman victory parade. There are priests burning incense at the head of the procession, followed by the victorious soldiers; in the rear, the disconsolate captives doomed to death or slavery. The same all-pervading aroma of the incense spells triumph to the troops and onlookers but death to the prisoners. Likewise the gospel message promises life — eternal life — to those in the way of salvation, but is the harbinger of death to unbelievers.

### A LIVING LETTER

Another criticism, apparently, was that Paul had brought no letter of introduction, unlike other envoys from Jerusalem (see Acts 18.27 for an example of this). Paul replies that the Corinthian believers themselves had become a '*living letter*' of his — more than adequate credentials — a letter written not with ink on paper, but by the Spirit of God on their *hearts*.<sup>17</sup> This reminds him of the essential difference between the Old Covenant (Moses Law), carved on stone tablets, and the New Covenant in Christ which would be written on the hearts of believers.<sup>18</sup> There was indeed a certain glory associated with the giving of God's law to Moses; it was manifested in the supernatural shining of Moses face when he returned to the

<sup>11</sup>Galatians 2. 12 (RSV) <sup>12</sup>Galatians 2.16 <sup>13</sup>II Corinthians 1.3ff <sup>14</sup>II Corinthians 1.15ff <sup>15</sup>See Revelation 3.14 <sup>16</sup>See below on II Corinthians 7.5ff <sup>17</sup>II Corinthians 3.1ff

<sup>18</sup>Jeremiah 31.31-34



Israelites after being shown God's glory on Mount Sinai.<sup>19</sup> But Moses then covered his face with a veil, so that the *fading* of that glory went unseen. By contrast, the glory of the gospel of Christ is unfading, and it shines in the heart of all true disciples. Figuratively speaking, the veil remains on the minds of unconverted Jewry; it is only removed once they turn to the Lord in faith.<sup>20</sup> Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles, have seen 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'.<sup>21</sup> However, in their present mortal state they also share Christ's suffering and humiliation, yet this affliction is comparatively light and temporary, and holds promise of an '*eternal weight of glory*'<sup>22</sup> when, at the resurrection, they exchange this early '*tent*' of mortality for a permanent '*house*' or home in God's temple — the Father's house of many abiding places promised to them by Jesus at the 'last supper'.<sup>23</sup>

Mention of the resurrection leads to the closely-associated subject of judgment — the judgment seat of Christ, where every private thought and motive of a believer's heart will be made manifest before all,<sup>24</sup> so Paul appeals to his readers to be reconciled to God.<sup>25</sup> He insists that he and his fellow-workers are Christ's ambassadors, entrusted with this task of reconciliation, and in their lives showing their genuineness by purity of behaviour and motive.<sup>26</sup> The apostle proceeds to warn the Corinthians against being '*unequally yoked*' with ungodly, wordly people<sup>27</sup> — an allusion to Moses law which forbade a farmer from ploughing with an ox and an ass together.<sup>28</sup> Under the law the ox was declared a 'clean' beast, fit for sacrificing to God, but not so the ass. Similarly Christians must not associate themselves with pagan habits — and in particular, not marry unbelievers<sup>29</sup> or be partners with idolators or the immoral.<sup>30</sup>

### HOW TITUS HELPED PAUL

Titus, Paul's trusted fellow-worker in Crete some years later,<sup>31</sup> was very active and concerned about the spiritual growth of God's truth in Corinth — he is mentioned several times in this epistle. By him Paul had sent a somewhat severe letter of censure (which has not been preserved) to the Corinthians and was now anxiously waiting to hear whether his reproof had been heeded; he was overjoyed that Titus, on his return to the apostle, was able to report most favourably on their reaction. This faithful go-between was to be the administrator of funds collected by members of the church at Corinth to relieve the needy in other Christian

<sup>19</sup>Exodus 34.29-35   <sup>20</sup>II Corinthians 3.12-16   <sup>21</sup>II Corinthians 4.6   <sup>22</sup>Although writing in Greek, Paul is thinking in Hebrew, where 'weight' and 'glory' are closely related words. In Romans 2.28,29 there is another instance of this Hebrew play on words, between 'Jew' and 'praise'.   <sup>23</sup>II Corinthians 4.16-5.4   <sup>24</sup>II Corinthians 5.10   <sup>25</sup>II Corinthians 5.20

<sup>26</sup>II Corinthians 6.3-10   <sup>27</sup>II Corinthians 6.14-16   <sup>28</sup>Deuteronomy 22.10   <sup>29</sup>See Matthew 19.6 and Mark 10.9 where in the original Greek the clause reads 'What then God yoked together, let not man separate'.   <sup>30</sup>cp I Corinthians 5.9; 6.18; 10.20   <sup>31</sup>II Corinthians 7.5-16

assemblies. Paul was understandably concerned that generous promises of financial help made earlier should now be implemented, so that a great prayer of thanksgiving might rise up to God on high for Christian thought and prayers ripening into practical help.<sup>32</sup> In this connection Paul makes a further reference to Israel's early history. He quotes from Exodus 16.18, where it is recorded that in their wilderness journeys the daily ration of heaven-sent manna met exactly the need of all the people. So, the apostle exhorts those in Corinth, look after your needy brothers and sisters in Christ now, and God will see to it that **you** will be equally cared for if the occasion arises. Generous giving is a major aspect of true love for one's neighbour, and will be reckoned by God as true righteousness.<sup>33</sup>

### PROOFS OF PAUL'S APOSTLESHIP

There is a notable change of tone when we reach chapter 10 of this letter; a much sterner note creeps in. It is as if in the interim Paul had received further disquieting news that his detractors were succeeding in their insidious attempts to discredit the apostle's status and achievements among the Corinthian disciples. Paul refuses to boast of these achievements, remarkable though they were. Instead, he says, he will boast in his '*folly*' (as his opponents had sneeringly described it) in not imposing on the assembly in Corinth various high-handed demands of 'payment for services rendered'. In ironic vein he chides the Corinthians that:

'you put up with anyone who enslaves you,  
anyone who eats you out of house and home,  
anyone who robs you, anyone who treats you arrogantly,  
anyone who slaps your face . . .'<sup>34</sup>

'To my shame', he adds, 'I must say we were too 'weak' for that!'<sup>35</sup> For his part he would boast only in his weaknesses — and he goes on to list some of the amazingly desperate situations he had experienced while serving his heavenly Master.<sup>36</sup> To all these had been added a '*thorn in the flesh*' to endure (probably some severe body ailment); this was to prevent him from becoming too proud about a special revelatory vision he had been shown 14 years earlier. On that occasion he had been '*caught up to the third heaven*' — '*into paradise*'.<sup>37</sup> What are we to understand by these words?

### 'PARADISE' IS NOT IN HEAVEN

It is all too easy to construe this passage as meaning that Paul had had a foretaste of future reward in heaven. But look at the words again, bearing in mind that in the Greek text there is no hint of any *upward* movement; the relevant verb simply means caught or snatched away, transported. To what? To '*the third heaven*'

<sup>32</sup>II Corinthians 8,9; cp I Corinthians 16.1-3 <sup>33</sup>II Corinthians 9.6ff with quotations from Psalm 112.9 and Isaiah 55.10 <sup>34</sup>II Corinthians 11.20 in FF Bruce's 'Expanded Paraphrase of the Epistles of Paul' <sup>35</sup>II Corinthians 11.21 (RSV) <sup>36</sup>II Corinthians 11.23-29

<sup>37</sup>II Corinthians 12.1-10



which clearly implies two others. Peter's second letter, chapter 3, accounts for all three. First, the original heavens and earth (the world of men, not the physical globe) which were swept away by the Flood; then '*the heavens and the earth, which are now*', which will be destroyed by fire at Christ's return on the Day of Judgment (verse 7). Finally, according to God's promise through Isaiah<sup>38</sup> '*new heavens and a new earth*' will be established by Christ's wise rule — this is the Kingdom of God on earth in which righteousness will dwell (verse 13) and it is the **paradise restored** about which Isaiah also prophesied.<sup>39</sup>

### CONCLUSION

Paul concludes<sup>40</sup> with further insistence that his apostleship is genuine. He warns that his imminent third visit to Corinth would prove a very painful one for any members of the congregation there who still had not mended their ways — he would not spare them this time. Such a visit would demonstrate beyond cavil that his authority came directly from Christ. Nevertheless he hoped and prayed that offenders would repent, and that he would not need to use his disciplinary powers, which were intended to be constructive, not destructive.<sup>41</sup> And with a final exhortation to all to be of one mind in the Lord he bids them farewell.

J H Broughton  
Asterley

<sup>38</sup>Isaiah 65.17   <sup>39</sup>Isaiah 51.3   <sup>40</sup>II Corinthians 13   <sup>41</sup>II Corinthians 10.8; 13.10

THE LINE OF JESUS CHRIST

<u>Genesis 5</u>		<u>Continued</u>	
4000BC	ADAM *	MENAN	ABIA
	ENOS *	MELEA	
	CAINAN *	ELIAKIM	ASA
	MALALEEL *	JONAN	JOSAPHAT
	JARED *	JOSEPH	JORAM
	ENOC *	JUDA	AHAZIAH (*)
	METHUSELAH *	SIMEON	JOASH (*)
	LAMECH *	LEVI	AMAZIAH (*)
<u>Luke 3</u>		MATTHAT	
3000BC	SEM	JORIM	OZIAS
	ARPHAXAD	ELIEZER	JOATHAM
	CAINAN	JOSE	ACHAZ
	SALA	ER	EZEKIAS
	HEBER	ELMODAM	MANASSES
	PHALEC	COSAM	AMON
	RAGAU	ADDI	
	SARUCH	MELCHI	JOSIAS
	NACHOR	NERI	JECONIAS
	THARA		
2000BC	ABRAHAM	<div style="text-align: center;"> <u>SALATHIEL</u>  <u>ZOROBABEL</u> </div>	
	JACOB		
	JUDA (TAMAR)	RHESA	ABIUD
	PHARES	JOANNA	
	ESROM	JUDA	ELIAKIM
	ARAM	JOSEPH	
	AMINADAB	SEMEI	AZOR
		MATTATHIAS	
	NAASSON	MAATH	SADOC
	SALMON	NAGGE	
1000BC	BOOZ (RUTH)	ESLI	ACHIM
	OBED (RACHAB)	NAUM	
	JESSE	AMOS	ELIUD
	DAVID (BATHSHEBA)	MATTATHIAS	
		JOSEPH	ELEAZER
		JANNA	
		MELCHI	MATTHAN
		LEVI	
		MATTHAT	JACOB
		HELI	
		JOSEPH (MARY)	JOSEPH

JESUS CHRIST

Note:

The names above are the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew names of the Old Testament, except where marked with an asterisk. Those marked thus (\*), do not appear in the New Testament record.



# In the Line of Christ . . . RUTH the Moabite

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IF YOU HAVE ever tried to trace your ancestry, you will appreciate how difficult it is to go back in the records. Few can find records that go back more than 200 years. The Bible provides the ancestry of Jesus Christ back to about 4000 B.C. This must be unique in human history (see chart opposite).

The chart shows the record from Adam (4000 B.C.) to Noah (3000 B.C.) to David (1000 B.C.) to Jesus, as given in the accounts in Genesis chapter 5, Luke chapter 3 and Matthew chapter 1. The records essentially agree from Adam to David but the Matthew record gives what is recognised as the regal line through Solomon down to Joseph, while the Luke record gives the line of Mary, descended from David through Nathan.

The two lines converge on Shealtiel and Zerubbabel at the time of the captivity. This could be due to the dying out of one line which would then be re-established by their kinsmen.

The lineage of Mary includes two with the name Levi and we know that Mary's cousin Elisabeth was 'of the daughters of Aaron'<sup>1</sup> so this may indicate some intermarriage between the tribes of Judah and Levi but the lineage of Judah was maintained.

The Matthew account leaves out three names between Joram and Uzziah which we can find from the records in Kings and Chronicles to be Ahaziah, Joash and Amaziah\*. It also has the distinction of referring to four women in an otherwise all male genealogy. These are Tamar, Ruth, Rachab and Bathsheba. What can we learn about the purpose of God from the inclusion of these four women, two of whom were Gentiles?

<sup>1</sup>Luke 1.5      \*Shown on page 10 chart with asterisk (\*)

In this article we will consider RUTH the Moabitess.

The book of Ruth comes as a lovely masterpiece of narrative at the end of the strife and bloodshed of the Judges.

### THE BARLEY HARVEST

In the narrative it refers to the gathering of the barley harvest<sup>2</sup> which occurs in the Spring. In the gospel of Matthew Jesus refers to his followers as the harvest.

‘Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.’<sup>3</sup>

The Jewish feast of ‘Firstfruits’, two days after the Passover has obvious relevance to the resurrection of Christ who was the ‘firstfruits of the resurrection’.<sup>4</sup> So, too, the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost, which follows 50 days later, is significant of the completion of the harvest. (The Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost as we can read in Acts chapter 2). It may not be surprising then that the Jews, by tradition, read the book of Ruth at Pentecost. We can expect from this that there may be more significance to the story of Ruth than just an account of a name in the genealogy of Christ.

### THE CHARACTER OF RUTH

Ruth, the central character, is a symbol of friendship and fidelity as the meaning of the name implies. Although brought up in Moab on the other side of the river Jordan from Israel, she recognised the truth of Israel’s beliefs and she wanted to be a part of the hope of Israel, the people of God. Her declaration to her mother-in-law, when it was suggested that she return to the idolatry of Moab shows her allegiance to the God of Israel.

‘And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.’<sup>5</sup>

She recognised that salvation is of the Jews, and like Abraham she showed her faith by leaving the land of her birth and her family ties, to become a follower of the God of Israel. Every follower of Christ has to emulate this example and get their priorities right.

‘Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.’<sup>6</sup>

Ruth was indeed blessed for her faith and trust in God.

Ruth showed not only fidelity in going to Israel with her mother-in-law but also humility and obedience. She went into the fields to glean according to the law and followed Naomi’s instructions.

<sup>2</sup>Ruth 1.22    <sup>3</sup>Matthew 9.37,38    <sup>4</sup>1 Corinthians 15.20    <sup>5</sup>Ruth 1.16    <sup>6</sup>Matthew 19.29



Boaz, her kinsman recognised her virtues and befriends her, providing for her needs generously. Ruth followed the maidens of Boaz and worked to support her mother in law to the end of the harvest.

When the time came for the threshing of the grain Ruth prepared herself, and then went to lie down near Boaz. Boaz awoke at midnight, realised his duty to Ruth as the kinsman redeemer of her inheritance and promised to help her. The narrative concludes with Boaz declaring his purpose to the elders of the city and he legally married Ruth who bore him a son Obed. This son was the grandfather of King David so he was a royal prince of Israel. Naomi looked after her grandson and was comforted for the loss of her two sons.

It is a lovely story. The righteousness of Ruth is rewarded and there is a happy ending. However there is more to this book than the simple narrative. It is easy to recognise Boaz, the redeemer, as prefiguring the work of Christ. Ruth therefore represents the Gentile bride, justified through faith.

### BOAZ THE REDEEMER

Throughout the account there are many details that emphasise the relationship between Boaz and Christ. Boaz was a royal prince in the line of Judah and the Lord of the harvest. He exactly followed the law in every detail. He gave Ruth the water of life<sup>7</sup> and promised her a reward.<sup>8</sup> Like Christ to his disciples, Boaz gave Ruth bread and wine.<sup>9</sup> In order to follow Boaz, Ruth had to separate from the rest of the women and she worked to the end of the harvest. Each of these aspects have a parallel in the disciples of Christ and are reflected in the parables like that of the sower,<sup>10</sup> and vineyard.<sup>11</sup> Ruth was purified with water and anointed (a type of baptism). She was judged to be a virtuous woman at midnight<sup>12</sup> and Boaz redeemed her inheritance in the morning. Boaz paid the purchase price for the redemption of his bride, just as Christ paid the price for the redemption of the saints.

‘... Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, . . . But with the precious blood of Christ,’<sup>13</sup>

These are a few of the details in the narrative that identify a beautiful type and point to the purpose of God in Christ. Boaz represents Jesus Christ and Ruth represents the bride of Christ, his followers.

So this simple story is not only historic but shows that God's plan of salvation was determined from the beginning and can be seen throughout the Old Testament.

### OTHER CHARACTERS

What about the other characters? Naomi represents the mother of Israel. She came from Bethlehem so we discern a link with Rachel who wept for her lost children and died at Bethlehem.

<sup>7</sup>Ruth 2.9 <sup>8</sup>Ruth 2.12 <sup>9</sup>Ruth 2.14 <sup>10</sup>Matthew 13.3-23 <sup>11</sup>Matthew 20.1-16 <sup>12</sup>Ruth 3.9-11

<sup>13</sup>1 Peter 1.18,19

'A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel, weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.'<sup>14</sup>

Naomi lost her sons Mahlon and Chilion whose names mean "sick" and "pining". They were Jews who made alien marriages so were lost to Israel. But through the faith of Ruth, Naomi's bitterness<sup>15</sup> was turned to joy; just as the faithful remnant of Israel will rejoice at the coming of Christ and the saints. Just as the near kinsman in chapter 4 was unable to redeem Ruth's inheritance so the Jews are unable to establish the Kingdom of God through the law. It required the work of Christ to redeem spiritual Israel and to raise up children of Abraham through faith.

'Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; . . . for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband'<sup>16</sup>

In these things we see our own hopes. If we separate from the idols of the world and worship the God of Israel; if we are baptised into Christ and work in his vineyard to the end of the day; then when our Redeemer comes we, like Ruth, may be judged worthy of an inheritance in the Kingdom to be established on the earth.

R Griffiths  
Bexley

<sup>14</sup>Jeremiah 31.15   <sup>15</sup>Ruth 1.20   <sup>16</sup>Galatians 4.27



## COVER PICTURE

'Reflections', the cover photograph kindly provided for us by Clive Rivers, reminds us of both the balance and the beauty of God's creative work. The marvels of creation point us in the direction of the Creator, but it is His Word alone which can make us 'wise unto salvation'.<sup>1</sup> It is recorded in the book of Genesis that man was made in the image of God. The question we ought to ask is, do we, in **our** lives, reflect any of the characteristics of our Creator?

'PRAISE ye the LORD. I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation. The works of the LORD are great, sought of all them that have pleasure therein. His work is honourable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever. He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD is gracious and full of compassion.'<sup>2</sup>

We have a very high standard to aim for, but the reward for faithful service is limitless.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Timothy 3.15    <sup>2</sup> Psalms 111.1-4

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Please send a copy of the FREE booklet 'The Bible Reading Companion' — tables for the daily reading of the Bible.

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